IS BEAUTY TO DIE OUT IN MODERN ART?

A Type of Latter Day Attitude Found in Marcus Behmer—Important Works of Botticelli, Rubens and Van Dyck on View—A Max Beerbohm Show

IN the art of those whom the Germans call "modern" is the element of beauty to die out altogether? The question is raised by the interesting exhibition at the Berlin Photographic Company's gallery of the first group to be shown in this country of illustrations, book plates, drawings, etchings and other productions of one of Germany's advanced young men, Marcus Behmer. Here is a man who has no bump of reverence, even for what he apparently admires extravagantly—and without reverence of a sort it is not easy to find beauty.

Behmer began by imitating Aubrey Beardsley quite frankly in the illustrations he made for a German edition of "Saleme" and in other work. Beardsley's "Salome" had beauty; his is repulsive. Now at 33 he has put forth a long list of things that are clever, accomplished, sardonically witty, laboriously satirical, grotesque, eerie, extravagant, shrewd, everything but beautiful in any accepted sense. Nothing that he shows here, and Mr. Birnbaum, who was with Behmer in Italy last summer, had the widest range of selection in making up this exhibition, nothing it seems could rouse in Herr Behmer anything but a spirit of mocking sarcasm, or at best a willingness to render certain naturalistic subjects with accuracy. It is as though he and the larger group that stand with him in current Teutonic art were absolutely ashamed to stand up and be counted as cherishing a regard for what is serious or fine. Perhaps this sort of thing is looked upon as sentimental or "old hat" by these ingenious folk of the new century.

It is hard to imagine this form of artistic grotesquerie as being aught but sterile. But these qualities need not blind the visitor to what is interesting and worth while in this man's achievement. He has a sure and competent way of handling his pen or pencil or etching needle, his line is drawn with a rare prevision as to its effect, and his pattern, especially in the initial letters and some of the book illustrations, is often praiseworthy. Sometimes again it is much too full, as in the "Temptation of St. Anthony," which is so crowded with ludicrous figures that Venus, mounted on her strange beast, is not seen without some effort. Even here he has deliberately avoided beauty in any form.

From the capital preface that Martin Birnbaum has written for the catalogue it appears that Behmer is a bit of a musician, an amateur entomologist (this is evident from his fondness for drawing all sorts of winged and legged insects in his decorations), and a voracious reader and admirer of vital notes in the world literature of to-day. It is a pity that he seems to employ so lean and peppery a portion of his soul when it comes to art expression.

In the Berlin Photographic Gallery there is also an exhibition of the caricatures of Max Beerbohm, one of the his wholesome and likable carcatures in English literary life for the past decade or two. Max, as he signs himself, is in fact quite a national British asset, although he now lives in Italy and no longer writes dramatic criticisms for the *Saturday Review*. To look at his wholesome and likeable caricatures after inspecting the strained work of Marcus Behmer is like coming home to Gilbert and Sullivan after a course in Strauss's "Salome" and "Elektra."

The good nature and the good drawing of his portraits and other studies will both commend themselves. In his best drawing here, that of Lord Byron shaking the dust of England from his feet, there is, for example, a balance of line and mass that gives the whole composition a rhythmic snap and brings out the precise quality desired. It was an agreeable experiment to bring over these caricatures; though some of them are as locally English as the London critics in "Fanny's First Play," the whole group is of interest.

So far as can now be foreseen this is to be an interesting art season. Besides the regular winter shows of the several societies—the first of these being that of the New York Water Color Club, which opened yesterday at the Fine Arts Building—there will be the first exhibition of the Society of American Painters and Sculptors, to be held in the armory at Thirty-fourth street and Park avenue, for which it is safe to predict novel features and a generous outcropping of ideas. This will come in the late season. There is to be a group of Scandinavian pictures, brought over by the American Scandinavian Foundation and to be shown beginning December 10 at the American Art Galleries. Its sponsors assert that it will be not merely an "official" representation of Danish, Swedish and Norwegian artists, but will have the vitality that goes with the work of men and women who are of the advance guard.

In dealers' galleries there is a general air of confidence and satisfaction over the outlook for a good season, which means in plain English that they expect to sell a good many paintings and prints and art objects between now and the warm weather of 1913. With the constantly widening zone of art knowledge and appreciation in this country the opening of new museums, the circulation of travelling exhibits from one such institution to another, everything tends to enlarge the flow through New York galleries of a swelling stream of newly painted or newly imported works.

There will be the one man exhibitions at the dealers' rooms, the loan shows at clubs (these often being among the really first rate events of the year), the displays of canvases produced by the industrious foreign portrait painters, who will be here in good numbers again this season, and, not least in serious appeal, the succession of sale exhibitions in the principal auction rooms of the city devoted to art works. A word has already been said in this place about the coming dispersal of the paintings, porcelains and bronzes of the late Col. Henry T. Chapman of Brooklyn, which will arouse keen interest when these things are brought forward at the Anderson Art Galleries in January or February. Among the striking events of this nature at the American Art Galleries will be the sale of the notable group of pictures of the M. C. D. Borden collection. While other sales are in prospect for New York's winter delectation it is too early yet to announce them. But it is not difficult to see that the months of January, February and March will be full ones.

To see the little exhibition arranged by Victor G. Fischer at his gallery one would suppose himself already in midseason. There are several really important things to be looked at. One of them is a large circular panel by Botticelli, showing the Virgin and Child, with the young St. John Baptist in a room in the foreground, while through the large window opening is seen a verdant landscape with rocks and a promontory over the sea, with the representation of St. Francis receiving the stigmata. There is a habit among some observers in these latter days of extreme expertness, as to attributions, of looking at once for the probable authorship of an old picture instead of determining for oneself whether the work is in itself beautiful before searching for its parentage. In the view of the present writer the question of identity, while absorbingly interesting, may properly wait until the quality of a work has had time to make its own impression on the beholder.

In standing before this fine performance, then, let the visitor enjoy first of all the spacious dignity and placidity of the group in the room, the beautiful

THE HOLY FAMILY. BY RUBENS.

PORTRAIT OF NICHOLAS TRIEST.

expressions of worship, almost of lassitude, in the faces of the Virgin and St. John, the broad simplicity of the design and the singular beauty of the color. The luminous flesh, touched with pallor, of the Child, lends added contrast to the ripe red robes, almost of a ruby hue, worn by the Virgin and the young prophet, the Virgin's costume also including garments of green and blue, whose quiet tones have their share in the harmony of the whole.

But it is the scene out of doors, in the middle and further planes, that will perhaps give most pleasure to the onlooker. So happily conceived is the landscape, so well contrived the approach to the grassy and rocky height upon which the dramatic episode in the life of St. Francis is taking place, that this, too, has a suggestion of intimacy and one feels profoundly the stir and import of this manifestation from on high.

At the edge of a little slope St. Francis half kneels, half shrinks toward the earth, as the emblems of the divine suffering are imprinted upon his hands and his feet, the marks of the nails of the crucifixion on the hands and feet of the Saviour. The way in which this is indicated is by long, thin lines of the same hue and thickness as those of which the halos for the trio in the room are rendered. The lines converge toward the top of the composition, and they extend downward, one to each hand and foot of the ecstatic saint.

Just in front of St. Francis, and a little below him, is his comrade, Brother Bonaventura, who lies half recumbent on the ground, a mute witness of the incredible sign of divine favor.

All around are light and air, and the peaceful landscape seems to place a benediction upon the scene. Mastery of design is here, and potency of execution. The presence of a red brick house in the upper centre of the composition is at first a little disturbing, but it takes its place in the scheme as one continues to study it.

Mr. Fischer has the opinions of a half dozen authorities upon this important picture. They differ only in how much of the work was done by Botticelli himself and how much by his pupils. The weight of evidence seems to favor the autographic character of the painting of the landscape and of St. Francis and some would give to the master himself also much or all of the work in the foreground. Even the casual visitor will feel at once the characteristic Botticellian aspect of the faces, with their long ovals, and of the hands with their taper fingers. The attitudes are in consonance with much of the painter's other recognized work and there is another factor, the prevalence, as elements of the design, of converging straight lines—the veil of the Virgin, pulled taut by the Child, offers an example—which the observer will have to go no further than the Metropolitan Museum of Art to find repeated in "The Miracles of St. Zenobius."

Passing from this panel to others of Mr. Fischer's new acquisitions, one halts before a large and fine Rubens, a "Holy Family," one of the most considerable specimens of the energetic Fleming seen for some time. Robust is the adjective customarily applied to the work of Rubens, and it fits this handsome canvas. There is nothing religious in the sense of worshipful, in the theme as here treated. The artist has depicted a pleasant family scene, with personages who might be (as no doubt they were) estimable folk of his own city, two mothers and two baby boys, with an elderly man in the background, and a third baby figure, this one with filmy wings suggested as issuing from the shoulders, his business being to help support, on a white pillow, the recumbent figure of one of the two children.

The younger of the two mothers is about to suckle her child, and he lies expectant, while at the same time he lays a caressing hand upon the face of the child of the other mother. It is decidedly inspiriting, this piece of painting, done with the zest and swing that denote easy mastery. The grouping is effective, the interest of the subject is concentrated, yet not so as to rob any part of the design of the reward to the eye that is yielded by ripe color and vigorous form. There are depth and quality in the painted flesh tones, and in the treatment of textures throughout. The love of generous types of womanhood, which remained with the painter to the end of his career, is in evidence here, for the principal personage is fashioned on sumptuous lines, without the note of coarseness that found its way into some of the Fleming's figures. The older mother, St. Elizabeth, has the look of mature and pleased satisfaction that one finds on the countenances of elderly women enjoying the sight of babies—it is almost grandmotherly.

And the accessories are all here, the carved cradle, the abundant good clothes, the comfortable pillow, everything of material welfare and ease. Whether one wishes to see any sacred significance here or merely to take the picture as a luscious piece of color, applied with the sweeping power of the man that knew how as few others have—in neither case this Rubens is one to be sought out and enjoyed. The picture was obtained from the Duke of Sutherland's collection.

In the same room, in the Fischer gallery, is a most distinguished Van Dyck, a portrait of Nicholas Triest, Baron d'Auweghem. Not often did Van Dyck show more keenly his appreciation of an aristocrat. This is every inch a man that he has presented here and he is also a gentleman. The suggestion of reserve strength, under full control, is a factor in the total effect, and so are the delicate yet incisive modelling of the chin and brow, the setting of the two eyes, in their relation to each other—note the obliqueness of the subject's left eye—and the indication of the strong, clean and shapely hands.

There is something better than convention in all this, good as Van Dyck's convention was; it is a real portrait of a real man. The artifices of the picture are few; the background is simple and penetrated with light through its misty green depths; the costume is again simple, with its uncomfortable ruff set off by the black doublet. A serious and admirable performance.

The visitor will be tempted, like the writer, to linger in the Fischer gallery overlong. Suffice it then that among the other newly exhibited things there is a small "Virgin and Child," ascribed to the unidentified painter to whom has been given the name "Master of the Death of the Virgin," a piece of liquid color and loving tenderness as to its treatment of the two personages. There is also a beautiful marble, carved in low relief, of a similar subject, which is given to some follower of Donatello.

Paris's Autumn Salon

PARIS, October 25.

THE tenth exhibition of the Autumn Salon at the Grand Palais, which is now attracting the attention of artists and laymen, is the rebellious offspring of the Société des Artistes Français, or "Old Salon" and the Société Nationale, or "New Salon."

Like a wilful child who will not obey the cut and dried rules that a parent has laid down for it, it broke away from the hearth of tradition to become independent. For this precocious act it has been denied official prestige.

No ceremonious galaxy of red ribboned men headed by the President of the Republic, the secretary of the Beaux Arts, &c., gives éclat on the formal opening day—vernissage—by a solemn survey of the different rooms followed by an awe-stricken crowd. That is an honor meted out only to the two spring Salons.

But if the French Government withholds its official recognition it has not had the power to crush the young Salon out of existence, for the increase in its own power has multiplied each succeeding year. The Autumn Salon to-day stands for the New Thought in art. It is an enemy to the stagnation of art. It is a field for experience unlimited and it is active with a personal force not to be denied.

The first "Salon" was held on the bookstalls along the quays of the river. A group of artists wishing to give prominence to their paintings and bring them under the eye of the public used these stalls out in the open as their place of exhibition. From this humble beginning evolved the colossal exhibitions which are being held annually at the Grand Palais.

The Société des Artistes Français has existed since 1673. Eventually discord was manifest, and men advanced in artistic thought, like Aman-Jean, Mesnard, Simon, Cottet, &c., rebelled against the tight academic school, of which Bonnet and Bouguereau are the strongest examples. If self-expression and the freedom to execute were to be carried out by these men a new place for exhibitions would have to be decided upon, for no jury would pass the work of these revolutionaries. Therefore up rose the Société Nationale. Here again liberty of free expression became muzzled. Traditions became iron bound and "flagrant" individuality was doomed. Another salon was a necessity. It is the Salon d'Automne that meets this need.

The members of this Salon are in revolt against what they declare is the lifeless mechanism of photographic representation and the traditional slavery that exists in the official salons. Its jury is drawn by lot each year from among all the members of the society, in the proportion that four-fifths are selected from the founders and societaires and one-fifth from the honorary members. This results in many women forming part of the jury, a feature unknown in the older salons. Thus the jury for the painting section contains five women among its sixteen members, two being Mrs. MacClure, an American born in Scotland, and Miss Rice.

The aim of the new Salon is strength and decision, force and rhythm, alike of form, line and color, and the members seek intensity of each in relation to each other. Vitality for its basis, freedom from fettering systems and an individual's right to work out his ideas toward self-expression—these are the principles adhered to by the disciples of the advanced movement.

In this modern movement there are many groups representing new methods of search, but their common aim is based on the same fundamental desire to create a living, rhythmical work of art by massed color and strong, flowing lines, their goal being continuity of expression.

To many the present exhibition at the Grand Palais has seemed bizarre. The works have the appearance of naive excesses, raw color, uncouth designs; but to others there is evident a sincerity of vision beyond these superficialities.

A very interesting section of this exhibition is the space devoted to the designs of the Martine School of Decorative Art. This school, of which the head is the great Poiret, whose gowns are the dernier cri in Paris and whose name is taken from the master dressmaker's daughter, Martine, promotes and encourages original drawing by children. No training in drawing is given; they are simply to make designs from their unguided imagination. The results obtained are really extraordinary.

From these colored cartoons important houses have taken the designs and woven them into rugs, carpets, hangings, all of which are on exhibition. Workmen on embroideries have copied them on lampshades, sofa cushions and screens. A refreshing bit of color combined with novel and attractive patterns is the keynote of all.

The rotunda has been reserved for the works of the sculptor Bernard. In the centre is the heroic monument in memory of Michel Servet, who was burned at the stake for advanced thought. Bourdelle has sent a double medallion in marble of two writers of Brittany, Edouard and Tristan Corbière, a vital piece of work.

Vlaminck, one of the futurists, has six paintings that merit attention. The swing, the dash, the beauty of blues and greens in two of the canvases and the certainty of handling the brush place this artist in the upper ranks. The American Afred Maurer shows paintings that are decided examples of the Matisse school. Hassenberg is well represented by nine paintings. His work is advanced and individual and will be understood only by the few.

The Cubists are more numerous this year. With them all is a physical sensation, nothing touches the soul, the heart. De la Fresnaye has two paintings that are examples of this mode of expression. In "Card Players," where the objects are all blending into each other, the only individual things are the cards themselves. The group of men are so entwined or cut off by color that mutilated parts of the figures only are decipherable.

Archipenko, the Russian artist, who is a Cubist in sculpture, has a group of figures so welded together that one might take it for curved scrolls, semi-human.

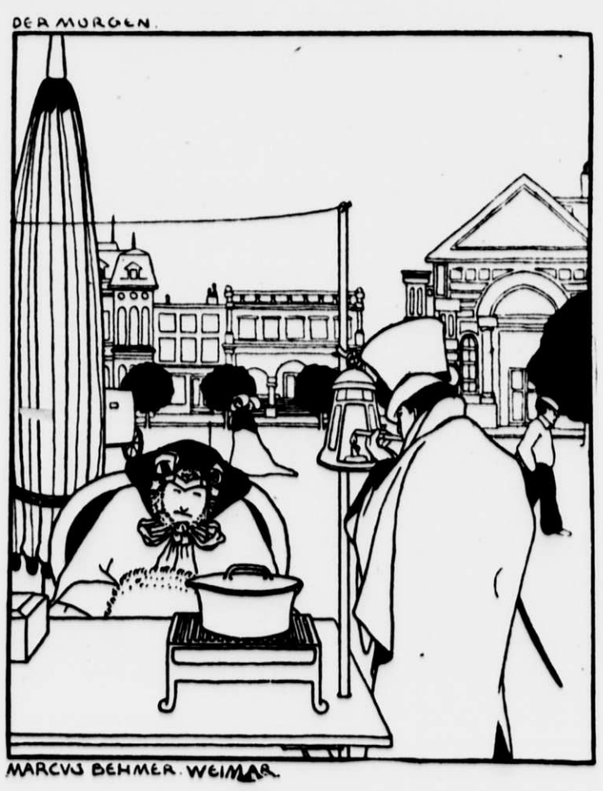
The plan of having a retrospective exhibition of nineteenth century portraits to be included at the show in the Grand Palais was happily conceived but difficult to realize for many reasons; first the impossibility of completeness; and secondly, the lack of space in the Grand Palais to hold them even if the museums could have been induced to furnish a satisfactory contribution. In this collection there is not a Whistler, a Monet, a Lembach or a Zorn.

Jacques Blanche in his three paintings shows the able technician, but there is an absence of the spontaneity and vigor found in his later works. Two Boldinis with their whirling gowns, papery texture and tendril hands are characteristic of this artist's work. There were two by Puvis de Chavannes, one his own portrait, executed in 1857, when he was 37. The influence of Couture is obvious. This canvas belongs to Paul Baudouin, the fresco painter. The other Chavannes, one of his last, painted in 1887, shows the master mural decorator in the full majesty of his power. A Degas is severe, tight and precise. Sargent's canvas, "Family Besnard," is inferior if one compares it to his "Carmencita."

In the retrospective show of statuary one marvels at the absence of a Carpeaux and a Rodin. Troubetzkoy has two statuettes, one a portrait of Miss Stevens art and the other of Mrs. Rutherfurd Vanderbilt.

Drawings shown at the Berlin Photographic Galleries, 305 Madison avenue.
HENRI DE MARSAY'S TUTOR. BY MARCUS BEHMER.

CARICATURE OF BYRON. BY MAX BEERBOHM.



EARLY MORNING IN A PARIS MARKET. BY MARCUS BEHMER.